Polls Apart

With This Statistical Proliferation, A Man Can Pick His Appraisals

By Art Buchwald

LAST WEEK, George Gallup's poll revealed that Sen. Robert Kennedy was more popular than President Lyndon Baines Johnson. This obviously has caused some consternation at the White House, where polls play such an important part in the life of the Great Society.

I would have hated to be the White House aide who had to break the news to the President about the results of the Gallup Poll. It must have gone something like this.

"WELL, MARVIN, read me some polls this morning while I'm shaving."

"Yes, sir, Mr. President. The Lurleen Poll in Alabama says you're running eight percentage points ahead of Adam Clayton Powell."

"That's fine. What else have you got?"

"There's good news from the Lou Harris survey in Southeast Asia. It reveals more people want you to bomb North Vietnam than they do Cambodia."

"What else, Marvin?"

"Elmo Roper has an excellent one, sir. He took a survey in Alaska and more people up there recognized your name than they did either George Romney or Sonny Liston."

"Remind me to go up to Alaska one of these weekends, Marvin."

"You made the 'Ten Best Dressed Men' of the year poll again, Mr. President."

"Not many votes in that."

"HERE'S ONE from South America I think you'll be interested in. The Sombrero Organization of Public Opinion took a survey in Venezuela and 63 per cent of the people questioned said they'd rather listen to you on the Voice of America than either President Sukarno or Gamal Nasser."

"Remind me to send Hubert Humphrey to Venezuela one of these days."

"Oscar Quayle has been working the state of Montana for a couple of months, sir, and I must say he's come up with some heady stuff. You're more popular up there than either Jimmy Hoffa or the Atlanta Braves baseball team."

"I'll work in something nice about Montana at my next press conference. Is that all you've got?"

"The Wall Street Journal took a poll among its readers and you're running 14 percentage points ahead of Ralph Nader, George Meany, Arthur Schlesinger and Norman Thomas."

"That's a fine newspaper."

"The Nielsen ratings have just come in and Luci Baines's wedding had a higher rating than 'Naked City,' 'Queen For a Day' and 'My Mother the Car.'"

"REMIND ME to send an autographed picture to Mr. Nielsen. Say, isn't this the morning that the Gallup Poll comes out?"

"Yes, sir, it is."

"Well, what are you waiting for? Let's have it."

"It's a popularity survey. I don't think you'd be interested in it, Mr. President."

"Let's hear it, Marvin."

"It seems, for some reason I'll never understand, Gallup asked people whom they'd prefer in 1968 as President—and more people mentioned Bobby Kennedy than they did you. I'm sorry, sir."

"Nothing to be sorry about, Marvin. I never put much truck in polls anyway. They're bound to be wrong every time."

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